

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



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## Traveling with Food? Keep Your Potluck Food Safe

As Labor Day approaches, many throughout the country will celebrate the end of summer by having picnics and BBQ's, many of which involve potlucks. As a result, numerous people will contract a foodborne illness and not even know it. Before you share your favorite dishes, take a few moments to learn and practice basic food safety.

- Start by ensuring that everything is clean and sanitized, this includes good personal hygiene, food preparation surfaces and equipment.
- Don't mix raw foods with ready to eat foods. Use separate utensils and cutting boards for raw meats.
- Cook foods to their minimum internal temperature and ensure this by using a food thermometer.
- Cool and store foods properly. If you plan to bring food that requires a form of temperature control, make arrangements to keep food at the proper temperature. Keep cold food cold (at 41°F or below) by using ice packs and a cooler.
- Maintain hot food hot (at 135°F or higher) in an insulated container. If you do not think you will be able to maintain these temperatures during transportation and serving, you may want to consider bringing a different dish that does not require temperature control.
- Don't prepare food for a potluck if someone at home has been experiencing symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea and fever within the past week. Germs could be transferred in the food and could make everyone who eats the food ill as well.
- If there is no place for people to wash their hands, take foods that can be eaten with utensils and that does not need to be handled. Try to minimize the possibility of people handling food with their bare hands because increase handling of foods increases the chances of spreading a foodborne illness.
- Any leftovers should be refrigerated promptly in shallow containers. Discard any food that has been left out for more than 2 hours.

Potlucks don't have to result in foodborne illness. Follow these tips and reduce the chances of having a miserable long weekend.

For more information on safe food handling practices contact the San Bernardino county, Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Services at (909) 884-4056 or visit our website at [www.sbcounty.gov/dehs](http://www.sbcounty.gov/dehs).

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